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ABSTRACT

The interrater reliability of the Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist subscale scores was examined. An attempt was also made to determine whether the background, experience, or training of the rater-teacher influenced the scores given. Two independent raters, the regular classroom teacher and a teacher of the emotionally disturbed, rated 62 students participating in an itinerant program for the emotionally handicapped. Pearson product moment correlations and t-tests were used in analyzing the data. While mean correlations for subscales showed moderate to high positive correlations between raters, there were significant differences between the scores on three of the five subscales--acting out, distractibility, and disturbed peer relations. This was also true of the total score. It was noted that there was less difference (mathematically) in the mean ratings of the two teachers. The differences in ratings may have been due to the amount of exposure the rater had to the student, or to the different training and background of the teachers. Because special education teachers are familiar with contingency management techniques, they may help to improve the student's behavior. (Author/GDC)

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Issues in the Effective Use of Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the inter-rater reliability of the Walker Problem Behavior Indentification Checklist (WPBIC) subscale scores and second, to determine if the background, experience or training of the rater influences the scores given in an effort to make the best use of this instrument.

Two independent raters rated 62 students participating in an itinerant program for the emotionally handicapped on five occassions during one school year. Pearson product moment correlations and t-tests were used in analyzing the data. Persons responsible for special programs placement will find the results useful in differential diagnosis.

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Current legislation regarding the education of the handicapped is replete with regulations regarding evaluation for identification of this population with special needs. Certain regulations require periodic evaluation of the individuals who have been formally placed to insure continued and proper placement. Public Law 94-142, The Education of All Handicapped Children Act (Federal Register, 1975), is "to assure that all handicapped children have available to them a free appropriate public education," however; section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act regarding discrimination against persons with handicaps has an over-riding legal effect on Public Law 94-142. Thus, parents of handicapped children do not have to exhaust administrative procedures before going to court. With these things in mind, maximum use should be made of the most reliable instruments where placement of children in programs for the handicapped is concerned.

Reasearch has shown that teachers can make valid judgements regarding the classroom behavior of students, (Maes, 1966, Bowers, 1958, and Stouffer, 1952)have pointed out the usefulness of teacher ratings of classroom behavior

in identifying the behaviorally handicapped student. Beilin (1959) discusses the usefulness of teacher ratings of classroom behavior when such behavior interferes with academic achievement. The background and experience (Thorndike & Hagen, 1967) of raters has been shown to influence their ratings there by producing rater-bias. Rater-bias, for the purposes of this study, refers to certain elements of the raters' background, experience, or training which influence his/her ratings.

Method

Subjects for this study were 62 elementary school students enrolled for a special education program for the emotionally handicapped in a suburban school district in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Of the 62 participants, 48 were male and 14 female, with a black to white ratio of approximately 1 to 8.

The Walker Problem Identification Checklist (WPBIC) is an instrument reporting a five factor structure based on 50 observable, operational statements concerning classroom behavior. Walker (1976) reports split-half reliability coefficients of .98 and also states that the use of more than 50 items does not increase reliability significantly. The regular classroom teacher (RCT) and a teacher of the emotionally handicapped (EHT) uses the WPBIC to evaluate the subjects' classroom behavior five

times each (total of 10 on each subject) during one school year.

Pearson product moment correlations were computed between the two raters for each of the five subscales and total score for each occassion. Fisher z transformations were used to average the correlation coefficient between raters across occassions for each of the WPBIC subscales in order to obtain a measure of inter-rater reliability. A t-test for correlated data was used to determine if there were any significant differences in mean ratings ($p<.05$) between the RCT and EHT.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 here

Results

Table 1 summarizes the WPBIC subscale correlations for five occassions and the mean correlations. Mean correlations for subscales range from a high of .56 (Acting Out) to a low of .36 (Immaturity) showing moderate to high positive correlations between raters. Table 2 summarizes each raters' mean for each factor across the five occassions and their corresponding t's. While moderate to high positive correlations were obtained between the WPBIC ratings given by the RCT and the EHT there are significant differences between the

scores on three of the five subscales (Acting Out, Distractibility, and Disturbed Peer Relations). This was also true of the Total Score. It is also interesting to note that there is less difference (mathematically) in the mean ratings of the RCT and EHT.

Discussion

In the author's opinion, the factor that most affected the ratings was the amount of exposure the rater had to the student (Mehrens & Lehman, 1973). In this study, at least three weeks were spent in observation by the EHT before any ratings were made. Because the students rated were, for the most part, in the mainstream, the RCT had much more exposure to the students than did the other rater. This factor probably accounts for the higher ratings given by the RCT.

Another factor that may have inflated the scores of the RCT and cause them to be different from EHT could be training. Persons trained to work with children having emotional handicaps usually have had some training in behavior modification. In this case such raters' perception of the students behavior would be colored by such training. An example might be students who seek approval for tasks attempted or completed. In time, this may become annoying to the average teacher; however, the instructor with a

knowledge of contingency management techniques, may utilize a shaping procedure to bring this behavior in line with the norm and better understand the motivational aspects of this behavior. An important analogy can be made here comparing the behavioral component of the emotionally handicapped child's evaluation to that of the retarded child's evaluation in making a differential diagnosis. Consider the culturally deprived child referred for placement in the class for the retarded. Such a student may score in the retarded range on intellectual measures and be far below grade level academically. After taking measures of adaptive behavior, one may find that this student possesses the social knowledge and skills that would enable him/her to survive in our society. It is then necessary that this type of evaluation be used with the emotionally handicapped student. Consider the complete evaluation including formal and informal assessment. Part of the emotionally handicapped students evaluation takes place in a one-to-one situation, which deprives him/her of the stimuli that may pre-dispose this student to a behavioral problem. The psycho-educational evaluation then, may not provide enough information for making the best diagnosis. Taking formal behavioral measures supplements psychological data and in many cases gives a more accurate picture of the "functional" level of behavior. Individuals responsible for making decisions about special programs placement may find the data produced in this study useful. The more information that is collected on a particular student, the more reliably that student can be placed in a particular program.

TABLE 1

WPBIC subscale r's, Fisher z's on five occassions and mean inter-rater reliability coefficient

	Occassion										
	1		2		3		4		5		
	r	z	r	z	r	z	r	z	r	z	Average
Acting Out	.64**	.758	.64**	.758	.43**	.460	.55**	.618	.51**	.563	.56**
Withdrawn	.51**	.563	.37**	.388	.44**	.472	.61**	.709	.55**	.618	.50**
Distractibility	.61**	.709	.69**	.848	.52**	.576	.48**	.523	.50*	.549	.57**
Disturbed Peer Relations	.17	.172	.56**	.633	.55**	.618	.52**	.576	.40**	.424	.45**
Immaturity	.32*	.332	.34**	.354	.45**	.485	.23	.234	.46**	.497	.36**
Total Score	.34**	.354	.53**	.590	.48**	.523	.60**	.693	.48**	.523	.49**

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

TABLE 2

RCT and EH Teacher's Means and t's for WPBIC subscale total scores on five occassions

		1		2		3		4		5	
		Mean	t	Mean	t	Mean	t	Mean	t	Mean	t
Acting Out	RCT	8.81	5.99**	7.50	3.70**	6.68	4.56**	5.85	3.58**	4.52	3.50**
	EH	4.42		4.89		3.52		3.51		2.84	
Withdrawn	RCT	4.23	1.40	2.92	.71	2.45	2.52**	2.28	2.52**	1.69	2.07**
	EH	3.50		2.56		1.42		1.28		1.08	
Distractibility	RCT	7.32	4.34**	6.42	4.02**	6.27	4.42**	6.15	3.18**	5.52	3.96**
	EH	5.74		5.16		4.56		4.77		4.08	
Disturbed Peer Relations	RCT	4.10	4.24**	2.42	2.48**	2.48	3.66**	2.26	3.68**	1.63	2.22**
	EH	1.58		1.63		1.11		1.04		.92	
Immaturity	RCT	3.15	1.03	2.82	.54	2.56	1.53	2.19	1.31	2.05	2.58*
	EH	2.73		2.62		2.06		1.66		1.32	
Total Score	RCT	28.19	6.72**	22.48	4.15**	20.77	6.29**	19.32	5.82**	15.55	5.90**
	EH	17.50		16.58		12.53		11.70		10.24	

* p .05
** p .01

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